

**THE CRISIS IN
THE COMMUNIST
PARTY AND
THE WAY
FORWARD
COMMUNIST
CAMPAIGN
GROUP**





1. THE PARTY CRISIS

The Communist Party is in crisis. Unrest and discontent are rife within its ranks. At every level of Party organisation there is dislocation and collapse. Party membership is plummeting, whilst work-place membership is virtually absent. The prestige of the Party within the labour and progressive movement can never have been so low.

At the very time when the movement is most in need of guidance and leadership in the fight-back against Tory reaction, the Communist Party is least able to provide it. There can be no other occasion in its 64 year history when the Party was so far from fulfilling the duty it was created to fulfil.

The crisis did not come about by chance. It is the conscious and deliberate objective of the Eurocommunist clique around the journal Marxism Today.

That is not to say that all our problems can be placed at the door of Marxism Today. Party membership and influence have been declining for some years. Sharp differences and divisions over policy and strategy have been witnessed before.

What is new is the systematic break-up and dissolution of the Communist Party. Today the very existence of the Communist Party as an organised Party of the working class is under threat. This threat coincides with the ascent of the Eurocommunist faction to the leadership of the Party.

Gordon McLennan, as general secretary of the Party, cannot be absolved from the blame for the present crisis. He and his associates must bear a heavy responsibility for what has come to pass. Since 1982 especially he has allowed both himself and the Executive Committee to come under the total domination of the Eurocommunist faction.

It is the Eurocommunists who now hold the whip hand. Therefore to understand the threat of liquidation facing the Communist Party, it is necessary to understand the revisionist content of their philosophy, and the opportunist thrust of their programme.

REVISIONISM

The central feature of the Eurocommunist group is its utter contempt for the working class.

On the international plane this is most evidenced by anti-Sovietism. In article after article, Marxism Today belittles the achievements of the socialist

countries and especially condemns the foreign and domestic policies of the Soviet Union.

As regards the issue of peace in particular, Marxism Today repeatedly ridicules the peace initiatives of the Soviet Union and often portrays it as a super-power bearing equal responsibility with the USA for the arms race.

On the domestic front, the anti-working class position of Marxism Today is notorious. It depicts the industrial working class as a spent force which must relinquish its leading position to the so-called 'new social forces', which are seen as mainly outside the working class struggle. It portrays trade unions as facing a 'crisis of legitimacy'. And it holds up the failure of the miners strike to win all its objectives as an example of the futility of class struggle.

The class struggle itself is removed from centre stage in the historical process of change. The fight between capital and labour is portrayed as simply one of a number of struggles: the women's fight for equality, the fight for peace and so on. These, far from being presented as crucial aspects of class struggle, are instead depicted by Marxism Today as autonomous, non-class based issues.

This revision of Marxism-Leninism on the highest plane of principle – the rejection of working class internationalism, the denial of the leading role of the working class and of the class struggle – necessarily translates into opportunism in practice.

OPPORTUNISM

Since the primacy of class struggle is denied, it follows that the aim of class struggle – the fight for socialism – is rejected as the main priority. For Euro-communists socialism is not on the agenda, and must be deferred to the distant future.

To facilitate this rejection of socialism and substitution of compromise and reformism for class struggle, Marxism Today has developed a body of analysis under the code-name 'Thatcherism'.

Conveying the view that the Thatcher administration marks a new form of Tory government without historical precedent, the claim is made that the labour movement, owing to its supposedly outmoded structures, cannot defeat 'Thatcherism'.

The inescapable conclusion is that the labour movement must enter into an alliance not merely with other progressive movements, but with other parties such as the SDP and even the Tory 'wets'.

The precondition of course for such a 'broad' alliance is the yielding of some

very real and immediate concessions by the working class. It is no coincidence that Marxism Today has recently pressed the trade unions to give up their opposition to wage restraint; that it has opposed the call for withdrawal from the Common Market; and that it has openly cast doubt on the continued relevance of the labour movement's independent Alternative Economic Strategy.

Neither is it any coincidence that in two recent articles in *Focus* Pete Carter, the Communist Party's industrial organiser, has attacked and condemned both the miners leadership and those trade unionists opposed to taking Tory cash for ballots.

Carter wants the miners to drop their demands on a future Labour government for the release of jailed miners and for the reimbursement of monies lost during the strike. This he says will improve the electoral prospects of labour and make life easier for Kinnock. And in the interests of trade union democracy as he puts it, he wants unions to accept Tory cash for ballots.

Carter's position ends up being no different from that of Eric Hammond or of any other right-wing labour movement figure. It is the position of capitulation and class collaboration.

The lesson from all this is that no comrade should be taken in by the rhetoric of the Eurocommunist leadership of the Party. All the talk is of broad democratic alliances with other autonomous and independent movements outside the labour movement. But the real intention is to strip the labour movement of its own independent programme of class struggle directed against state-monopoly capitalism, and to turn it into the hand-maiden of social-democracy.

What does this mean for the future of the Communist Party?

LIQUIDATIONISM

The Communist Party was created as a disciplined, tightly organised party of the working class. It is a weapon of class struggle, and an instrument for the achievement of socialism.

But if you lose faith in the working class, deny the significance of class struggle and see socialism as off the agenda, then it follows that you must deny and reject the Communist Party in its established form and structure.

If some vague abstract form of democracy devoid of class content is your aim, and alliance with the new social forces and the SDP is your means of attaining it, then you do not need a disciplined organisation rooted in the working class at all. What you need is an open, amorphous, loosely-formed movement or pressure group.

Lenin defined liquidationism, the dissolution of the party, as opportunism carried to its extreme extent: the material and organisational counterpart to revisionism.

From this perspective the recent actions of the Eurocommunist-controlled Executive Committee have a coherent meaning and purpose.

The repeated attacks on the Morning Star and its editors; the break-up of London and North-West Districts and the clamp down on other district committees; the dissolution or disciplining of key advisories; the expulsion of leading industrial comrades and the suspension or victimisation of others; the wholesale gerrymandering of boroughs and branches and the impositions of bans and proscriptions on their officers and personnel; the breaking up of other branches and their enforced re-registration: all these and more testify to the drive on the part of the Eurocommunists to destroy the Communist Party as an independent organised party of the working class.

Such is the threat to the Communist Party. How can it be met?

2. TWO TACTICS

Opposition to Eurocommunism has in the recent period spread very rapidly. It is now the case that the majority of active party members are opposed to the Eurocommunist-controlled Executive Committee. This was convincingly demonstrated at the 1985 AGM of the PPPS where the anti-Morning Star stance of the EC was dealt a 'whopping defeat' to use EC member Nina Temple's phrase.

This defeat of the Eurocommunists has meant that the very existence of the Morning Star has been successfully defended. But the time has come to move from the defensive phase of opposition, to the offensive phase.

It is now imperative that comrades committed to the working class and to the principles of Marxism-Leninism carry the attack to the Eurocommunists. The working class demands a genuine Communist Party capable of providing leadership. That demand can only be met with the total defeat of Eurocommunism.

This raises the crucial question of tactics. There are, broadly speaking, two alternative approaches.

HEADS DOWN

The first approach counsels caution and compliance with the authority of

the Executive Committee. It says that if there is disagreement and dissatisfaction with the Eurocommunists, then opposition must be expressed and conducted via the normal party channels. That is to say, we must try at successive congresses to defeat and remove the Eurocommunists.

This approach is most consistently put by members of the Straight Left faction for their own opportunist reasons. But this approach also finds favour in one way or another with some principled comrades. This is only natural.

After all, the Eurocommunists wield the authority of the Executive Committee. Whatever they do, they do in the name of the Party. It is therefore difficult for comrades trained in democratic centralism and for whom discipline and loyalty to the Party leadership form an established code of practice to openly oppose the Executive Committee.

But the drawbacks to this approach are many, and they are serious.

Firstly, compliance with the Eurocommunist-controlled EC would be to ignore the fact that it maintains its domination by an undemocratic process of gerrymandering, expulsion and exclusion, and that many of its directives are flagrantly in breach of the rules and constitution of the party.

Secondly, to argue that the Eurocommunists can be defeated in the normal procedure of congress is to foster a dangerous illusion. The experience of both the London and North-West districts is that when the minority Eurocommunist position is threatened, the rule book is simply thrown away. The Eurocommunists will never allow their overthrow by means of congress.

Thirdly, if we take the heads down tactic to its logical conclusion, this must mean the complete abandonment of the Morning Star. Already in many districts the instruction has gone out to party members to terminate all forms of support for the Morning Star.

Fourthly, compliance with the authority of the Eurocommunist EC must mean the prevention of unity and cohesion in the ranks of the opposition. If we accept the instruction of the Executive Committee to remain corralled in our branches, boroughs or districts, this would mean leaving the editors of the Morning Star, the communists on the management committee of the PPPS, and the other expelled and victimised members isolated and unsupported.

Fifthly, and most crucially, a heads down approach means a tacit acceptance of the leadership's right-wing revisionist policy, amounting to class collaboration, betrayal of the miners, and abandonment of the working class and its struggle for socialism.

The Eurocommunists themselves would very much like us to pursue this obedient and quiescent form of opposition. In this way they can pick us off one by one, branch by branch, district by district. For this reason, comrades genuinely opposed to Eurocommunism must reject this approach.

MASS RESISTANCE

The alternative approach is through mass resistance and mass defiance to defend our rules and principles.

There are already examples of this everywhere. Districts have held aggregates in defiance of EC instructions. Branches have refused to recognise or endorse the expulsion and exclusion of their members. Borough committees which have been formally dissolved by the unelected rump of the London District Committee continue to function. In the majority of Party advisory, comrades continue to work in unity with expelled and victimised comrades to plan and coordinate communist activity in the movement.

In each of these cases comrades refuse to accept that defiance of the Executive Committee is equivalent to defiance of the rules or constitution of the party. They are loyal to the constitution of the Party. They do support the rules.

What they are unreservedly opposed to is the arbitrary interpretation, selective application, or outright violation of the rules of the Party by the Eurocommunists dominating the Executive Committee.

This position brings us to the role of the Communist Campaign Group. The tactics of the Communist Campaign Group are nothing less than to place this tendency of mass resistance on a secure and systematic footing, and to give it a coherent organisational form.

The tactic of organised mass resistance does not mean calling on comrades to voluntarily give up their Party cards and quit the Party. The Eurocommunists would like nothing better than for their opponents to give up without a fight.

On the contrary, the Communist Campaign Group urges all comrades to stay in the Party and fight for the principles for which they joined the Party. If this means expulsion or any other form of discipline, then the policy of the Communist Campaign Group is to urge comrades to refuse to recognise or accept such disciplinary measures.

The intention of the Communist Campaign Group is to bring about a situation where the unconstitutional and anti-party legislation of the Eurocommunist faction will be blocked and nullified at every level of party organisation and party activity.

In this way the Communist Campaign Group exists to ensure that the Party comrades can continue to give collective expression to the role of assisting the wider working class in accord with Communist principles.

RIGHT OF DETERMINATION

All this will mean that there will in effect operate a dual structure in the Communist Party. There will be two rival poles of authority and organisation.

The Eurocommunists, exercising the stamp of authority of the Executive Committee will claim that they are the elected leadership of the Party and therefore represent the majority of members. They will claim that any opposition to them formal or otherwise, constitutes factional and anti-party activity.

The Eurocommunists, however, have no right to make such claims. It is those who oppose the liquidation of the Party and the right wing revision of its programme who are the authentic voice of the Communist Party. They are the communists. They are the Communist Party.

The Communist Campaign Group will prove, by means of rallies, meetings and other forms of activity, that the minority Eurocommunist clique only maintains the leadership of the Party by undemocratic and unconstitutional means. We will prove that it is the Eurocommunists who are the real anti-party factionalists.

How can this stalemate of claim versus counter-claim be resolved? Who is to resolve it?

We cannot have recourse to a bourgeois court of law. But neither can we have recourse to the communist court of law, the National Congress at this stage. For as the last Special Congress demonstrated, the Eurocommunists are not above rigging our court of law.

There can only be one solution. The final arbiter must be the membership of the Party as a whole. But since they cannot exercise this arbitration through gerrymandered congresses, they must exercise it through other means.

Only through their collective stand as regards political allegiance, the direction of financial support, and the sale of the Morning Star, can the base of the Party determine the outcome of the present day crisis.

The whole thrust of the strategy of the Communist Campaign Group is to allow the base of the Party to exercise its right of determination.

The precise manner in which it will be able to do this will depend upon the concrete situation as the struggle develops. The issue now is to mobilise the maximum opposition to the Eurocommunists.

3. AIMS OF THE COMMUNIST CAMPAIGN GROUP

The Communist Campaign Group was established in June 1985. It was formed to unite all comrades committed to the working class and the principles of Marxism-Leninism in effective opposition to Eurocommunism.

The main aims of the Communist Campaign Group are:

- to demand and secure the immediate reinstatement of all expelled comrades and the ending of all other forms of victimisation;
- to defend the rules and constitution of the Communist Party, and the principles of Marxism-Leninism which guide its programme *The British Road to Socialism*.

In particular, this means a clear recognition of:

- the leading role of the organised working class in a broad democratic alliance directed against state monopoly capitalism;
- socialism as the primary objective of class struggle, taken to the point where the working class and its allies are able to take state power into their hands;
- the need for the development of international working class solidarity, including with the national liberation movements and with the socialist countries where the working class has state power.

The defence of these cardinal principles are central to the overriding objective of the Communist Campaign Group which is the re-establishment of the Communist Party as a leading force in the fight against capitalist oppression and for socialism.

TASKS

To achieve this objective the Communist Campaign Group needs to fulfil five priority tasks.

Firstly, it is necessary to continue to extend the Communist Campaign Group on a nation-wide basis, ensuring that there are representative structures at every level of organisation.

Secondly, it is imperative that the Communist Campaign Group provides the



Harry Pollitt speaking to a demonstration in Trafalgar Square May 1942

utmost support for the Morning Star. The CCG will urge all principled communists to join with other left activists in the Morning Star Supporters Groups and work to build the circulation of the paper.

Thirdly, it is necessary for the Communist Campaign Group to support the task of coordinating the work of individual communists in the trade unions and in the broad movement. We have a proud heritage of communist leadership in the labour and progressive movement. The Communist Campaign Group will do its utmost to defend that heritage.

Fourthly, in order to provide a coherent ideological and theoretical underpinning to the organisational tasks outlined above, the Communist Campaign Group will need to launch a monthly journal. Its aim will be to provide a Marxist-Leninist perspective on the crucial struggles of our time, and to promote socialism in the ranks of the labour and progressive movement.

Fifthly, the Communist Campaign Group needs to secure a sound system of financial support. It goes without saying, that it cannot fulfil the political and organisational tasks it has set itself without widespread financial help from its supporters. It therefore calls on all comrades committed to the working class and to Marxism-Leninism to donate generously to our appeal.

TERMS OF SUPPORT

The Communist Campaign Group is *not* a faction. It exists not to violate or alter but to defend and promote the rules, constitution and programme of the Communist Party.

The Communist Campaign Group is open to support from all communists, including those victimised, who share the aims and objects of the Group.

The Communist Campaign Group is open to support from any Party organisation where the majority of members share the aims and objects of the Group.

The Communist Campaign Group is *not* open to support from any organised faction either outside the Party or inside the Party. As regards the latter, we refer specifically to the Straight Left faction.

The individuals grouped around Straight Left have their own newspaper, their own organisation, and their own objectives.

Hiding behind a camouflage of Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, their left sectarian actions in effect aid and abet the Eurocommunist plan of liquidating the Communist Party.

Just look at their recent track record.

Their activities at successive AGMs of the PPPS hindered the struggle to defend the Morning Star against right-wing revisionism, and allowed George Bolton and Chris Myant to be elected to the Management Committee.

When the London District Congress of November 1984 was unconstitutionally closed down, members of the Straight Left walked out side by side with McLennan and the Eurocommunists.

Today, the Straight Left faction advocates more vociferously than anyone else a heads down policy of compliance with the Executive Committee thereby deliberately hampering the opposition to the Eurocommunists.

We repeat, the Communist Campaign Group is not open to support from the Straight Left or any other faction. It is open only to support from principled comrades who are genuinely concerned to win back the Communist Party as a force for socialism.

4. CONCLUSION

In this pamphlet of the Communist Campaign Group many questions remain unanswered and much detail as concerns aims and organisation has been omitted.

No comrade should be surprised by this. We are at a difficult stage in the history of our party. A complete programme of action, with every detail filled in, cannot be formulated on paper. The details can only be furnished in the course of struggle involving ever wider numbers of comrades.

The intention here has been to map out a general perspective both on the nature of the present threat to the Communist Party, and on the approach needed to combat it. As such this pamphlet forms only a starting point to the struggle to defeat Eurocommunism.

We have a difficult road to travel before we once again have a Communist Party deserving to or capable of leading the fight for socialism. We call on all principled comrades to help get us on that road.

